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the growth of the mill, and on other phases of this kind form a commendable feature of the work. Special value is also inherent in the discussions of the commerce of this great and staple crop. The movements of the grain are followed from the local market to the seaboard and to the foreign country. While the author treats many of these topics from an economic point of view, the book, as its title indicates, does not present an abstract study of the economics involved in the wheat industry, but endeavors rather to lay before the reader descriptive and statistical facts the possession of which is necessary before conclusions can be drawn or solutions of problems suggested. Every step in this direction must be welcomed, for rural economics has not received the attention it merits or rather demands.

The illustrations, as a rule, are well chosen. An extensive and fairly exhaustive bibliography in so far as American publications are considered shows that the data presented were derived from the latest and most reliable sources.

J. I. SCHULTE.

Washington, D. C.

Mother Earth: A Proposal for the Permanent Reconstruction of Our Country Life. By MONTAGUE FORDHAM, with preface by J. A. HOBSON. (London: The Open Road Publishing Company, 1908. Pp. 157. 1s. net.)

This is an interesting little book. The author's aim is to outline a scheme for the rehabilitation of agriculture and rural social life in England as a remedy for rural depopulation and the unemployed in cities.

The plan for the reconstruction of agriculture has for its object "the increased happiness, health, and efficiency of the people, the production of more of the nation's food, and a wider distribution of wealth." The means proposed for the accomplishment of these ends are: (1) to grant to all citizens the right of access to land and capital; (2) the government regulation of the markets; and (3) state intervention to raise the wages of agricultural laborers and to fix a legal minimum wage throughout England.

That these proposals involve stupendous difficulties the author himself recognizes, for his outline of the reconstruction of rural life

on an economic basis is a conception of an almost ideal state of society. The underlying thought in all three propositions is government ownership of the land and the supreme power of the state to control social activities. "Our ideal in land reform," he says, "is the recognition of the principle that every one has a right to a plot of land, to tools, and to all that is necessary to start him as a free worker on the land. It would be well if the state were concretely represented in every man's mind by the house and land which the state would provide for him" (p. 44). But a house and land are not sufficient. "If he is to improve his position access to capital is almost a necessity" (p. 46), and the author favors the loan society idea for furnishing capital at a low rate of interest, but "financed by the Government" (p. 58).

To enable farmers to pay better wages, greater returns must be assured to the producers of agricultural wealth. This, in the author's opinion, can be accomplished by cutting out altogether or limiting the enormous profits of middlemen, and this can only be satisfactorily done by government intervention and administration of the marketing of products "for the national interest alone"—a scheme for which he outlines on pages 78 to 88.

Such objections to the fixing of wages by the state as being destructive of individual character, not within the scope of legislative action, its impracticability, and its economic weakness the author meets by affirming that it is no more degrading for a laborer to work for wages fixed by government than by a trade's union; that legislation has successfully dealt with the problem in New Zealand; and that any industry, which is so economically weak that a minimum wage fixed by government will kill it, ought to die. And so he maintains "that it would be sound policy for the state acting in the interest of the nation to strengthen the financial position of our poorer classes by fixing a legal minimum man's wage at the rate of, say, 25s., a week" (pp. 94, 95).

The lines laid down for the reconstruction of rural social life are: (1) to remove the prejudice in the minds of the laboring class; (2) to reform the system of public education; (3) to improve housing facilities; (4) to give every man good wages, more leisure, and better prospects; and (5) to remove the dreariness and increase the living interest of country life.

Looking at the scheme as a whole, it is a combination of the

theories of the single tax, land nationalization, state communism, and socialism. As such, to our mind, it is too comprehensive. The scheme rests on the assumption that a government is an entity and fails to recognize the law of economic and social growth. Progress is not made by any such revolutionary schemes. The time may come when this plan of "practical land nationalization," as the author calls his scheme for land reform, may be in operation; but, if so, it will come step by step. In this scheme the steps are lacking, for the author finds no way of permanent practical reform in agricultural coöperation, the creation of small holdings, agricultural credit, and other factors which are today playing their part in the agrarian problems of England and other countries.

The scheme fails, also, to recognize the law of necessity in life. To grant every man a piece of land is no assurance that each would be successful in its cultivation, for individuals differ in their inclination and ability to labor. And how about the differences in location, fertility, soils, etc., which go to make up the desirability of property? Could this be adjusted to the satisfaction of all? If governmental paternalism is to take the place of individual character and industry, the spur of life would be dulled and no one would feel impelled to activity as the result of the pressure of competition in life.

While commending the purpose of the book to present a solution of the agrarian problem in England, it nevertheless seems too idealistic and too radical for the practical age in which we are living.

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JAMES B. MORMAN.

Intercompany Relationships of Railways in the United States as of June 30, 1906. Special Report No. 1, INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION; prepared by the Division of Statistics and Accounts. (Washington D. C., 1908.)

For the first time in the history of railroads in America a clear idea of the part played by railway companies in the field of finance has been presented in printed form. Various writers have told the public about the methods used to secure control of different railway companies through community of interest, holding companies and agreements, but no facts of real merit have been presented to support them. The report here reviewed is called the